

Mr. Brooks was born in 1909 in Norwood, Louisiana and grew up outside of Stephenson, Mississippi. As part of a large family, his parents were sharecroppers, and then worked at a sawmill during the Great Depression.

He was drafted into the Army at 21 in 1940 and was a participant in the famed Louisiana Maneuvers, where hundreds of thousands of soldiers conducted readiness exercises at home to prepare a response to Germany's invasion of Poland and France.

After his required one-year service, Brooks was originally discharged and returned to New Orleans. However, after the attack on Pearl Harbor he re-enlisted. As he himself put it, after Pearl Harbor, "There was no question" that he would continue his service.

He joined the 91st Engineer Battalion, a unit comprised of 1,193 Black enlisted soldiers and 25 white officers. Soon, the unit boarded a converted ocean liner in New York and headed to the South Pacific.

After an extended voyage due to dodging submarines, the 91st arrived in Queensland, Australia, an Allied Forces defensive base in the war against Japan.

Private First-Class Brooks fondly remembers the Australian people's acceptance of the Black soldiers and the equal treatment they experienced without the specter of segregation.

Without Jim Crow, Brooks made white friends, and attended dance halls, cinemas and hotels freely—freedoms he had never experienced before.

Brooks did not see combat during this deployment, instead serving as a staff member to officers, lieutenants, and captains.

While the white officers ate and lived separately from the Black soldiers, the private said he never experienced discrimination or racism during his service.

Their battalion was also tasked with building several buildings, hospitals, roads, housing, and recreation centers throughout Horn Island, Papua-New Guinea and the Philippines, dodging Japanese bomb raids.

Brooks' unit left the South Pacific in 1944 and he left the service a year later. Many of his stories focus on the positive—a sign of his outlook on life.

He received the Good Conduct Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and Presidential Unit Medal. He wanted to attend college, but he never received his GI benefits—an injustice tragically felt by many Black veterans of the Second World War. His daughter Vanessa Brooks says that he was also never offered a low-interest bank loan or a reduced down payment for a house.

Asked in late 2021 what he would like his legacy to be, he said, "I would like to be remembered as a strong man. A good soldier." He certainly will be.

Mr. Brooks was a local celebrity, and in 2021 for his 112th birthday he was honored with a drive-through party. He danced on his porch during a serenade serenaded by the World War II museum's musical trio, the Victory Belles.

A military flyover flew above his Central City home in New Orleans.

He loved the New Orleans Saints and spent this past holiday season cheering them on with family.

Mr. Brooks lost his original Army uniform during Hurricane Katrina, but was presented with an authentic reproduction and his old unit's badge last November.

His family says they plan to bury Mr. Brooks in his replicate uniform, as was his request.

My thoughts are with the Brooks family as they say goodbye to their beloved patriarch.

I pray that Mr. Lawrence Brooks is at peace after his 112 years of life. We are all indebted to his service and should be inspired by this "good soldier's" positivity and zest for life. I know I am.

Rest in God's peace, Lawrence Brooks.

RECOGNIZING MY POSSIBILITIES FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, CHARMAINE SOLOMON

HON. VAN TAYLOR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to recognize Mrs. Charmaine Solomon for her nearly fourteen years of dedicated service and leadership as the Founder and Chairman of the Board of My Possibilities, a first-of-its-kind organization serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

As the mother of a special needs son, Charmaine envisioned a future where her son had access to opportunities following high school that would allow him to grow and discover his full potential. Determined to make her dream a reality, she partnered with two other mothers who shared her same vision—creating an organization whose services would improve not only their children's future, but would also impact the lives of countless North Texans.

Founded in 2008, My Possibilities served as the first full-day, full-year continuing educational program for adults with developmental disabilities in Collin County. Under her steadfast leadership, the organization has worked with over 600 HIPster's—Hugely Important People—equipping them with the tools needed to develop employable skills and live full and independent lives. The college-style campus offers students educational, socialization, and residential opportunities as well as job placement programs in the community.

Throughout Charmaine's tenure, she could regularly be found roaming the halls of the campus, interacting with students, and giving them high-fives and hugs. As a testament to her many efforts and in honor of her dedication, in 2019 the Plano Independent School District named their Adult Transition Center after Charmaine.

In addition to her service with My Possibilities, Mrs. Solomon is a Licensed Professional Counselor, devoted wife, and loving mother of four. She has been an active member of CASA of Collin County for more than eight years and has also volunteered her time working with at-risk youth at CITY House.

Madam Speaker, as Charmaine Solomon begins a new chapter of her life following her final meeting as the longtime Chairman of My Possibilities, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me today in honoring her incredible impact in North Texas and the Third Congressional District.

DOUG HALL

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Westminster Fire Chief Doug Hall for his 43 years of service to the City of Westminster and surrounding communities.

For four decades, Chief Hall has been active within the Westminster community and fire department. Chief Hall began his career in 1978 when the City had 18 firefighters, an administrative assistant, and only one of its three fire stations was staffed. The Westminster Fire Department now has 143 employees, with 123 serving in an emergency response capacity from six staffed fire stations.

For the past 10 years, Chief Hall has served as Fire Chief. Under his leadership, Westminster Fire Department earned an ISO Class 1 rating, the Center for Public Safety Excellence's (CPSE) highest accreditation. Less than 300 agencies have received an ISO Class I accreditation nationally. In addition to overseeing the modernization of the department, including upgrading public safety telecommunications systems and other technological upgrades, Chief Hall developed new career pathways for future firefighters through a multi-agency firefighter academy and officer development program.

Outside of the Westminster community, Chief Hall is recognized as a leader in the Colorado firefighting community. He served as President of the Board of Directors for the Adams and Jefferson County Hazardous Materials Response Authority from 2019 to 2021 and represents Colorado municipalities as a member of the Colorado Fire Commission. Chief Hall has been a member of the Westminster Rotary Club for 13 years.

I extend my deepest appreciation for Chief Hall and his service and dedication to our community. I thank him for his continuous dedication to serving the people of Colorado.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF THE MAYOR OF DEARBORN, JOHN B. "JACK" O'REILLY, JR.

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Former Mayor John O'Reilly on the occasion of his retirement from the City of Dearborn, Michigan, where he has honorably served its citizens in various capacities for past three decades. His significant contributions to our community are worthy of commendation.

Mr. O'Reilly graduated from St. Alphonsus High School in Dearborn, attended Oakland University, and earned his law degree from the University of Detroit. He has been a mainstay in Dearborn and throughout the State of Michigan during his celebrated career in public service and has followed in the footsteps of his father John B. O'Reilly, Sr., who served as Dearborn's fourth mayor. Mr. O'Reilly began his career in public service as staff counsel